

The Story of Joey
Post 2 - Session 7-12

Session 7:

Joey reports that his body feels 'quiet.' There are only three phones going and they are needed because "people are getting ready for the first meeting of the winter". He continues "cleaning out old, junky folders." Mom reports that he has been calm. There were no signs of the impulsivity he was experiencing yesterday.

Mom lets me know that Joey never makes any reference to the people in his body when he is at school. He can clearly inhibit talking about the system even if he can't inhibit the system itself. He was however talking to himself last night, a habit of his. At school, he avoids social sanctions against this behavior by going into the bathroom when it starts.

As the session is beginning, Joey reports that an old man is coming to his body that he has not met before and that he is planning to die at midnight on the 103rd anniversary of his birth. He believes that this man may have run the training program at one time.

At 14 minutes into the session, Joey shares an important update: the old man has died on the airplane on his way to his body. Smiling, he says that this is good because "it is upsetting to other people inside to see someone die." My assumption is that Joey is telling us something important with this story but I can't decode it.

After this session he went to school. His mother spoke with him a few days later and he said that his body felt funny. She said it became clear to her when she explored this with him that he was sad about being away from home. This was the second time in his life that he had ever expressed sadness. The first was when he had started at the school two years ago and felt worried that none of the therapists there would be able to help him. I asked her if he cried. She said that Joey had never cried. This is also the case for her. In fact, she reports that no one in her family cries. I will look for the capacity to cry as a positive training indicator, for both Joe and his mom.

(To better understand her son's experience, she is training as well)

He had never before expressed homesickness. It seemed to pass quickly though. His mother offered to get him for the weekend before the Christmas break and he said that he would be alright, that he could wait until Christmas. This, too, was unusual for Joey and his mother thought it a good sign.

His teacher reported that he seemed to be 'getting things' with a little more ease. His mother said that she asked him how his classes were and he answered her, directly, for the first time. He said they were learning about gravity, and he went on to try to describe what the lesson was. He couldn't make this clear. It was a first that he used such a word as 'gravity'. He was also complaining about headaches. I am not worried about his sadness. I never address sadness with training. Any emotion that flows is, to me, a positive emotion. But the headaches are a concern and probably mean that I have trained him too low, at least for his present brain.

Session 8:

Joey returned from school last night and he reports, in session today, that people in his body are not as loud. He has had to kick three people out who have been drinking coffee. There are two new doctors in his body who are researching how to make better coffee, coffee presumably that is less harmful but can still keep the night operators awake for their important duties. Lots of people, he reports, left

at midnight, to go on vacation. They are, he assures me, coming back. Once again, nine are left and some of these were sleeping as he gave me this update.

He reports some headache after the last training but not bad. He says it feels easier to remember what is going on in class, but he does not remember my name. He's a little embarrassed to admit this and I share with him that I am terrible with names too. I realize, at this moment, that he had never seen my name written, so I sat next to him on the couch and wrote it out. I asked him if my name reminded him of anything - like a burning ocean. I was attempting to provide an image to see if this would aid his recall. I don't think he saw it. It was itself an unimaginable and incongruent image and he doesn't have the facility with language that puns require. (Punning may be a good indicator of sensory integration capacity). So he drew a blank until he remembered his teacher's name which he had forgotten just moments before. There is also some element of performance anxiety in this forgetting. I think he feels put on the spot and then unable to 'perform' memory. Today he planned, executed and finished a rather elaborate Lego project.

He was rattling off the account of all the activity in his head when I asked him if he would stop for a second and breathe. I thought, in the speed and excitement of the moment, that he might be producing some of the very activity he was reporting. He stopped immediately and tried to take a breath but had great difficulty coordinating this activity. He was quiet and was clearly taking an internal inventory. He wants to tell me that there are some number of new doctors. He counts on his fingers as he looks inward. There are two old doctors and two new doctors. Different areas of his body require different doctors (specialists). "Four at night and four during the day". I think doctors are always on duty, like an emergency room.

No change in placement but I bring the frequency down on the right at T4-P4 in steps to 2-5 Hz. During training, he begins to jiggle his foot. (the impetus to reduce frequency) I asked him about that and he said he was thinking. His foot was thinking, or helping him to think. (this could, of course, also be an indication that we have gone too low and he needs, as it were, to wind himself up). He pointed to the electrodes and said, "People are taking notes and learning how to do this".

When his mother and I speak of him in the third person, his body tension, as represented in the amplitude of high beta frequencies, goes up. I reported this, saying ours would too, but Joey said that he isn't listening to us (this seems to be both the case and not the case) because he is "teaching people how to do this (neurofeedback) and to help others with their brains". I asked him if he needed any help answering their questions on how the brain worked and he politely declined the offer. He could answer their questions himself.

Clearly Joey is learning something of value to him and something that he wants to share. This is the kind of boy he is.

Session 9:

My daughter Blake, a child therapist and neurofeedback practitioner, worked with Joey during the time I was away on retreat over Christmas. She had filled in for me once before and she asked him if he remembered her name. He did. He also remembered my name. He told her that two new people had entered his body to train, one whose name is Blake and one whose name is Sebern. He had a brief headache after training but it disappeared quickly. His sleep and appetite are good.

His mother reported that Joey was working on the computer (looking up Lego information) and that he got stuck at a website that he didn't want to be at. He told her that he was "frustrated". The fact that he used the vocabulary of emotion signals a significant change. In these circumstances in the past he would have used the word "funny" if asked to describe his feeling. They made candles when they returned home and Joey was focused and relaxed. He reports that he feels good physically and that there aren't a lot of people presently in his body. Only nine. There is some coming and going of the trainers and there is still active testing related to caffeine consumption. He has instructed those who are present to follow along with his NF training and to use this to train others.

About twelve minutes into the session, Joey says that he is being asked what the red and blue lines at the end of each period mean. Blake explained what they are and he said that was what he thought. Soon after, he reports that he is feeling relaxed (training at T4-P4 at 2-5 HZ after 6 minutes at T3-T4 at 2.5-5.5 HZ) and that those people who are focusing on the NF will be trying it on their own and will ask him questions. About ten minutes later, he tells Blake that some people want to keep doing the training at school, at night but that he isn't happy with this idea because he is worried that they will make a mistake and mess up his body. I wonder when he says this if he is expressing worry about Blake and me, if he is trying to tell us that we might be making a mistake. He has been getting headaches and he has felt training effects in his body. I will listen specifically for this worry. He is, it seems, internalizing us and the training. Neurofeedback is becoming his own endeavor and he isn't sure, really sure, that it won't hurt him. All reports are positive except that there is no change in the clarity of his speech. He is able to make the 'th' sound but in general multisyllabic words are still tripping him up. He often misses the 'lifter'. None-the-less, he is cooperating with his mother's speech lessons. Joey is earnest and sincere in all his efforts. He is a boy who really tries. It is just very hard for him to speak, to remember and to move in a coordinated way. But his handshake is terrific. He is making his presence known.

Session 10:

After the last session Joey and his mom went for a walk in the woods and he was engrossed with people inside him who were "ordering parts from Japan and China on computers". Blake asked him what kind of computers and he said, "Neurofeedback computers". They were looking into "creating a neurofeedback laptop system that could be mobile". (His mother knows of such systems and has probably spoken to him about them.) One person (only one!) is bored with the neurofeedback games. Joey reports no negative effects but mother is concerned that his speech sounds a little "slurry".

Not only did he remember Blake's name, she now has 3 or 6 namesakes within, and there were some people who have the name Sebern as well. But there is also a trouble maker in the mix. One person that he trained before (before NF) is smoking, he is breaking the rule. This person has been out drinking and he may have robbed someone. About seven minutes into the training, Blake compliments Joey on how he is keeping his body tension low and he responded, "How could that be when I am yelling at the person who is smoking". He doesn't want to have to kick him out; he doesn't want to kick anyone out. Later he reports that this man has been sent to a doctor for training and that he will stay if he complies with the treatment. Near the end of the session, Joey reports that the smoking person, the rule breaker is in treatment with the doctor and for now can stay in the system. I wonder who or what this is in Joey?

Once I begin training, I pay special attention to the content of dreams. If dreams or fantasies become aggressive, this is just as significant a training indicator to me as it would be if the person had acted aggressively. It is an early warning

system. This does not represent a concern about impure thoughts. It also does not represent the neutrality or analytic curiosity of my therapeutic training. It is, to me, an indication that I am pushing the nervous system in some way that is not beneficial to the pursuit of regulation, equanimity and relatedness. The same will apply here as Joey represents the nature of his internal life in these characters, these articulated aspects of himself. He is a cooperative soul, not one for robbery or breaking the rules. But a smoking, drinking mugger has shown up now and this indicates the need for a protocol shift.

Joey has begun to talk more about his complex inner world. He is not at all reticent to do this. Some of it will come as a surprise for one so young. Joey has been married twice and is presently still married to his second wife. Both former and present wives are reticent about having their names spoken so he doesn't say them. He doesn't remember when he married his first wife but he does say that she had to go away on a lot of business trips. He has had a child with this woman, a boy named Mono. (Joey was born in South America, his mother is North American, his father, South American. Mono is Spanish for monkey.) He is not sure how old his son is. His first wife returned to her first husband. Soon after, he married his present wife. All of them work at the Simpson School, named after Homer Simpson. This is a network of schools which were begun three years ago. Joey is the principal of these schools which are located now in California, Arizona, New Mexico, New York and Washington, D.C. (not in Massachusetts or Vermont). A new one is forming in South America. These schools are co-ed and include middle school, high school and college. They focus on vocational education, making bicycles and electronic equipment. There are no elementary grades, which is the level that Joey is actually, presently in.

It is interesting that these are co-ed schools. I am not sure of this, but it has seemed that all the internal people, with the possible exception of those named Blake and Sebern who have entered the system recently, are male. Of course, there are also the wives. Joey attends a school for LD boys. The course of his married life does not parallel that of his parents and the placement of the schools are not in the places where he has actually lived, although they may be places he has visited. And then there is the son, Mono, in Spanish meaning monkey and in English, the single one. Although I remain interested in the possibility of idiosyncratic meaning in all this, I don't think, at this point, that it has much depth. It feels more like mental Lego

blocks, something to keep his mind occupied when he is unable to use it for more creative pursuits. I think this elaborate world speaks to his loneliness and I think, as well, to his refusal to be helpless to his brain. Could Mono represent the wish to be the only child, it could. It could also speak to how singular he is or how alien. It could also be a more random brain product, a blue block in a set of red ones.

It may be how matter-of-fact Joey is when he is telling us all this, but there is an interesting way in which, although his internal world is complex with intriguing history and sets of relationships, none of these revelations make Joey himself seem either more complex or more crazy. This is a preservative inner world which has a lot of numerical detail and is heavily populated with what seem to be hard working, altruistic, mostly male people, but it is also a flat world. His mood is mostly good, with rare excursions into irritability, and in some essential way, he too, is flat. He has an elaborate inner world but no inner self, no emotional self. There will be a time when Joey begins to feel, and when he does he will also become more aware of the extent of the disability he has lived with. This, I imagine, will be a difficult passage.

The training today is T3-T4 2-5 Hz, 2-7 inhibit for 9 minutes and T4-P4 at 2-7 for twelve.

Session 11:

"Peaceful". This is the word that Joe's mother uses first to describe her son's state. But Joey doesn't report feeling much calmer even though the people inside are slowing down some. There is some fighting going on inside for more pencils and pens to take notes on the neurofeedback. It's not peaceful inside because of yelling at a person who did not finish his paperwork. "Sometimes the feelings on the inside are not the same as on the outside", he reports. Sleep has been good and he has had no unpleasant effects-no headache or stomach ache. No bad dreams.

When switching from T3-T4 at 6 minutes to T4-P4, Joey reports that the person who was "in charge of filing cabinets" has left because he was "drinking coffee". A new person has come to do the job because "it is so boring". The job requires a person to be available to open drawers with a key, to access information, including mail. Is he talking about quieting when he talks of fewer people drinking coffee, or is he trying to be compliant with my anti-drug campaign? I don't really know. Mom adds that Joe often refers to the parietal area as where he has "information clogs". It looks like P3-P4 may be in order for this boy.

In the midst of the session, Joey volunteers that he has just had an old thought that he doesn't need to think about anymore. His mother sees this as good news because Joey tends to perseverate. A bit later, he reports that "nine more people came into [his] body to do neurofeedback and that it is now overbooked". He was asking people to make more room. "But it is good because these people brought laptops". Of course, Joey's whole system could be seen as a well populated perseveration.

Unfortunately (I think), at the end of the neurofeedback session even more people were heading in. They all seemed interested in neurofeedback, but there is a sense of frenzy, of rush, even while Joe himself looks calmer. Maybe it's an expression of appreciation of neurofeedback (he loves to come), but I am looking for less activity in the system, not more flights to catch, or people to manage. There has, thankfully, been no mention recently of the convention of 5 billion. Even if they are all doing neurofeedback, that's too many.

Today's protocols: T3-T4 at 2.5-5.5, 2-7 inhibit for 6 minutes; T4-P4 at 2-5, 2-7 inhibit for 24 minutes.

Session 12:

It is the day after Christmas and I am back from retreat. Joey has dyed his hair blond! He reports that it is not too noisy inside and when I ask him, he says that he is paying less attention to the internal world. His main concern today was how to keep the second floor of his Lego building from collapsing. "It needs Lego steel", he said with a smile. He still wants chocolate whenever he can get it. With a gentle reminder from his mom, Joey hands me a candle that he has made which is quite beautiful and with it a note that he has written, "I am glad you are working on my brain". I thanked him for both the gift and the card and I asked him if he really felt glad that I working on his brain. He answered with absolute certainty and sincerity, "Yes."

Mom reports that he lost his necklace this AM, a very important necklace and in his agitation over this loss, he hit his older brother. It wasn't clear exactly what provoked him, if anything other than baseline agitation and fear over the loss, but it is very unusual for Joey to act aggressive physically, or verbally for that matter. His mother would have expected his agitation at the loss of his necklace, but not his striking out. He calmed down quickly but only after finding the precious object. She also feels that he has become somewhat defiant. This may also be, as she suggests, that "he is clearer now about what he wants and doesn't want".

He refused oatmeal that was made for him this AM, something he would not have done. It didn't appeal to him.

Generally, his spirits have been good and he has been a pleasure to be with, as usual. He wrote an e-mail to a girl he knows in Israel who has severe CP, to help cheer her up.

I dropped T3-T4 out of the protocol. I could not see what, if anything, it was contributing and had some concern that it might be exacerbating his moments of negativity and reactivity. I have seen this before in others. I added T3-F3, 6 minutes at 12-15 HZ for speech and attention. I think craving chocolate also indicates the need for some left side training. Chocolate consumption is now linked to depression and serotonin production. We hadn't made much progress initially at F7-F8 on speech, so I want to try something else that stays in the areas for receptive and expressive speech. The frequency is based on how low I've gone on the right without discomfort and my overall assessment that this boy is primarily over aroused. T3-F3 makes him a little sleepy after six minutes, but he likes it.

Since I think everything that someone does, feels, thinks, eats, and dreams relates first to neurofeedback (actually to timing phenomenon), until it can be ruled out, I am left wondering if I have pushed his nervous system too low, so he feels without resources or too high so that he is feeling driven, aggressive. I think, in part because he is training so low already and in part because of that 'winding up' action that we saw recently, that too low is the better guess so I begin to bring him back up at T4-P4. When we get to 3-6, he likes this. Initially, he hadn't felt very much at 3-6 Hz but he has been training and his brain changes. That is what we expect. So frequency changes too-not always, but often.

Joey is very attentive to his training. He focuses on the screen, even while trying to manage all the ruckus within. He seems to 'get' the task and to be able to discern what he feels, if not yet able to describe it well in words. I always forget, and he always reminds me, that he loves the dolphin, a stuffed animal that vibrates when he meets EEG thresholds. When I give it to him, he tells me it's not on and I reply that it's time for me to get with the program. I hit 'T' and it starts. The weight of it soothes him, I think, as well as providing tactile feedback. The training, it's clear, would not, for him, be the same without it.

Today's protocols: T3-F3 at 12-15 HZ, 2-7 inhibit for 6 minutes; T4-P4 at 2.5-5.5 for 17 minutes and then up to 3-6 for 7 minutes, both at 2-7 inhibit. He reports feeling tired after T3-F3. Otherwise, "Good".

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